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Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

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Thursday, 25 February 1999, 3.30 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Fowler	(Canada)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Al-Dosari
	Brazil	Mr. Valle
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

The situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force pursuant to Security Council resolution 1186 (1998) (S/1999/161)

99-85149 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.50 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force pursuant to Security Council resolution 1186 (1998) (S/1999/161)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Bulgaria, Germany, Italy and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Čalovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Sotirov (Bulgaria), Mr. Kastrup (Germany) and Mr. Fulci (Italy) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force pursuant to Security Council resolution 1186 (1998), document S/1999/161.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1999/201, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1999/108, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General.

(*spoke in English*)

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Argentina, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Security Council is meeting today to consider the situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It has before it the important report of the Secretary-General (S/1999/161) on the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), as well as the letter of 29 January from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, contained in document S/1999/108, whose content clearly reflects the current complicated situation.

Furthermore, in the conclusions of his report, the Secretary-General indicates that events in the region — some very recent events were reported today during our consultations — suggest the need to extend the presence of UNPREDEP for a further six-month period.

For those reasons, Argentina firmly supports the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to which it has contributed observers since December 1995. We are convinced that UNPREDEP represents one of the Security Council's central efforts for peace in the region, particularly at a time when delicate and complex negotiations are taking place with regard to the situation in Kosovo.

As the Secretary-General indicated in his report, the presence of UNPREDEP in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has an effect that is both preventive and stabilizing. The fact that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has not felt the repercussions of the conflicts that have affected and continue to affect neighbouring countries and regions is clear proof that UNPREDEP is fulfilling its mandate in a completely effective manner. Because the situation in Kosovo has not yet been resolved, the presence of UNPREDEP, which is a preventive Force, constitutes an irreplaceable reassurance.

Equally important is the mandate that this Council gave to UNPREDEP to monitor illicit flows of arms and other activities prohibited under resolution 1160 (1998). It is a well-known fact that illegal arms flows exacerbate the intensity of conflicts, creating tragic circumstances that hamper reconciliation and peace processes.

In the light of all this, we support the extension of UNPREDEP's mandate for a further six-month period, until 31 August 1999, with its present composition and mandate.

In conclusion, I should like to congratulate and express my confidence in the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fernando Valenzuela Marzo, to Force Commander Brigadier-General Ove Strømberg and to their staff for their efforts and dedication in the accomplishment of this very important mission.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Čalovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): Let me start by expressing my delegation's great satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, the Permanent Representative of Canada, a country with which the Republic of Macedonia has traditionally enjoyed excellent relations, presiding over the Security Council for the month of February.

The Security Council will decide today whether the United Nations will continue with its very important contribution to peace and security in the region of my country, the Republic of Macedonia, in the currently troubled Balkans.

At this moment, it can be argued at length that the contribution of the United Nations is more necessary than when the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) last year.

It is common knowledge why it should do so. I will avoid elaborating on that. The main reasons for the Council to decide in favour of extension are clearly spelt out in the letter of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrov, dated 29 January 1999, contained in document S/1999/108, and in the Secretary-General's report to the Council on the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force, contained in document S/1999/161 of 12 February 1999.

We are pleased with the Secretary-General's recommendation contained in paragraph 34 of his report that

> "the Security Council may wish to consider extending the presence of UNPREDEP, with its existing mandate and composition, for a further period of six months until 31 August 1999". *(S/1999/161, para. 34)*

We are also pleased that the members of the Security Council during the process of consultations have supported the Secretary-General's recommendations.

I would like to use this opportunity to underline that UNPREDEP is discharging its mandate successfully and that the cooperation with Macedonia and other international organizations is exemplary and good. I would like to express our satisfaction with the work of the present head of the mission, Mr. Valenzuela Marzo, and with his predecessor, Mr. Henryk Sokalski. I would also like to express the same satisfaction with the work of the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Ove Strømberg, and of course with all the military and civilian personal under their command.

Indeed, the Security Council should be pleased with the dedication that all the members of the mission have shown in carrying out the task entrusted to them. I am sure that this cooperation and the carrying out of this task will continue successfully in the period to come.

Since I have the floor, I would like to say a few words about the situation in our region. My comments will contain nothing that is new to the members of the Council, but they are important for its records and for public opinion at large.

The situation continues to be very difficult, dangerous and unpredictable, and it can be safely considered a serious threat to the peace and security of the Balkans. The possibility of a new bloody war in the Balkans should be considered a real one. There remain unacceptable options of violence, of the use of force and of achieving something by military means and not through diplomatic and political means. I regret to say that the forces of peace, particularly in Kosovo, are weak, and it is of paramount importance that they be strengthened. In that human and political effort the United Nations and Member States of this Organization, individually or collectively, should take part — I repeat, should take part.

In sum, the United Nations should not abandon the region, should not run from the troubles and should prevent the worst from happening. Extension of the mandate of UNPREDEP should be seen, therefore, as providing important support to the peace forces in the region. It should be seen as a must for our Organization. At this moment, prevention of a new war in the Balkans is of utmost urgency and a very serious obligation of the Security Council under the Charter of the United Nations, in particular under Article 24, where the Council is requested, as I would like to underline, to act on behalf of the Member States. And I can safely state that the Member States fully support the extension of the mandate of the first successful preventive peacekeeping mission of the United Nations.

Let me add a few words more on this. As you know very well, the veto right has been extensively discussed in our Organization, particularly in recent years. The Member States, with the exception of a few, are in favour of not exercising this right that has been entrusted to the permanent members of the Security Council. The main reason, or argument, against the use of the veto has been and is now that the Security Council under the United Nations Charter acts on behalf of the Member States, not of an individual Member State. In the case of UNPREDEP it should be noted quite strongly that the extension of its mandate is supported by all — I repeat, all — Member States except one, and that because of bilateral considerations, something that we all consider to be in full contradiction of the Charter of our Organization.

I will end my statement by expressing the hope that the Council will adopt a resolution in support of the Secretary-General's recommendation, in favour of peace in the region, in favour of continuing the important and successful work of UNPREDEP. In Macedonia in such a situation we say that it is never too late to take a positive step.

The President: I thank the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for his kind words addressed to me.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The principled approach of the Russian Federation to assessing the priorities of the activities of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force at this stage is well known and has repeatedly been described by the Russian delegation in the Security Council. We view this United Nations operation as an important element of the system to monitor compliance with the arms embargo and with the ban on external assistance to terrorist activities in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in accordance with Council resolution 1160 (1998).

The period since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1186 (1998), which made the relevant monitoring tasks part of the Force's mandate, has given ample evidence of the growing urgency of this work. In monitoring the observance of the arms embargo and other injunctions established by resolution 1160 (1998), this Force is making an important contribution to stabilizing the situation in Kosovo and to the success of international efforts to achieve a peaceful political settlement of the crisis, as well as to guarantee the security and stability of the entire Balkan region.

Our position is that the functions of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) involved in monitoring compliance with the arms embargo and with the injunctions established by resolution 1160 (1998) should become the main component of UNPREDEP's activities, and this should be more clearly highlighted in the mandate of this operation.

Guided by this approach, the Russian delegation proposed corresponding amendments to the draft resolution on the extension of UNPREDEP's mandate, which is under consideration today. Unfortunately, these amendments were not duly reflected in the final text of the draft resolution, which does not fully take account of the importance of principle in reorienting UNPREDEP to monitor compliance with the arms embargo.

Under these circumstances, the Russian delegation will not be able to support the draft resolution.

The President: It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1999/201) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, France, Gabon, Gambia, Malaysia, Namibia, Netherlands, Slovenia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

China

Abstaining:

Russian Federation

The President: The result of the voting is as follows: 13 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Security Council.

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): In casting its vote today, the United States has once again expressed its confidence in and its strong support for the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) and its extension for a further six-month period until August 1999. UNPREDEP plays a critical role in monitoring sensitive points along Macedonian borders with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. UNPREDEP is a vital actor in promoting stability in the region.

Since achieving independence, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made enormous strides towards democratization and economic stability. We welcome the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's recent strengthening of relations with several of its neighbours and the successful holding of parliamentary elections in October and November of 1998. These elections resulted in a pledge by the new coalition Government — which continues to include an ethnic-Albanian political party — to carry on the important policy of working actively for inter-ethnic harmony.

Despite these improvements, however, there remain very real regional threats to the security of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In this context, we remain deeply troubled by the continuing strained relations between Skopje and Belgrade, and by the lack of progress towards the demarcation of their mutual border. This, in our view, continues to be a major potential threat to the stability of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. There is a distinct risk that tensions elsewhere in the region will reverberate along this border.

The international community is maintaining its large investment in consolidating peace and ending violence in the former Yugoslavia and nearby areas. Kosovo is only the most recent flashpoint posing a threat to stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Although considerable progress towards a negotiated political settlement of the Kosovo crisis was achieved at Rambouillet, much more will be required in the weeks and months ahead. In any event, we remain committed to building peace in the Balkans.

Skopje in turn has contributed greatly to the international community's efforts in Kosovo by facilitating the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission, by agreeing to authorize the deployment from its territory of the OSCE Extraction Force, and by offering to host the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Kosovo Verification Coordination Centre and the European Commission Monitoring Mission. UNPREDEP itself plays a specific but very important role in achieving the international community's goals for Kosovo. We greatly appreciate the value of close cooperation between UNPREDEP and each of these missions.

UNPREDEP's current mandate is to prevent the spillover of tensions into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and by its presence to deter threats and prevent clashes. This mandate has been sufficiently broad to permit UNPREDEP to operate very effectively in monitoring and reporting on cross-border activity. Such activity includes any illicit arms flows across the border with Kosovo, of which there has been very little. The fact that the border between Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has remained secure despite tensions in Kosovo demonstrates just how successful and necessary UNPREDEP has been. Our vote today to extend UNPREDEP's mandate is a vote of confidence in a mission that is needed now as much as ever.

My Government very much regrets the decision by one member of the Council to exercise its veto with respect to this draft resolution. We believe the overall interests of security in the region — particularly during this sensitive period — should be sufficiently compelling

to outweigh other considerations. We believe UNPREDEP's role is indispensable at this time. Therefore, we hope to begin work immediately with members of the Security Council to find a way to allow the international community to continue to meet this critical need, without disruption.

The United States has been proud to participate in this groundbreaking preventive deployment operation. We commend Mr. Henryk Sokalski, the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General; his successor, Mr. Fernando Valenzuela Marzo; and the Force Commander, Brigadier-General Ove Strømberg, for their strong leadership of this highly effective mission.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Slovenia deeply regrets the fact that the Security Council was unable to adopt today the necessary decision to extend the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in Macedonia. It is regrettable that the Council is once again paralysed by the negative vote of a permanent member. The present situation may have a negative effect on developments in and around Macedonia and on the functioning of the Security Council as the principal United Nations organ entrusted with the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The situation in and around Macedonia is fraught with instability and potential threats, which call for an array of international responses, among them the preventive deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Macedonia. The Council will have to think deep and hard to find a way to continue to respond to this and other urgent needs of the situation at hand.

Today is also a sad day for the Security Council. The authority of the Council is being diminished as a result of a variety of factors, and Council members should make a special effort to reverse the current negative trends. It is essential that Council members deal with specific situations from the standpoint of ensuring peace and security in the world and from the perspective of the Organization as a whole. This is essential for the realization of the responsibility conferred upon the Council by the United Nations Member States and enshrined in Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations. We reiterate this point, which has been made by several Council members on a number of occasions over the past few months. Furthermore, today's experience has strengthened our conviction that there is a real need for reform of the Security Council, including the reform of the right of veto.

We find ourselves in a situation in which we have to reflect seriously on the importance of UNPREDEP for the United Nations as a whole. UNPREDEP is a success story of United Nations peacekeeping and of the United Nations in general. It is a model of preventive deployment which should inspire the United Nations in dealing with a variety of incipient crisis situations in various parts of the world. In Macedonia, UNPREDEP has been operating since the country's independence. It has been playing a vital role in the stabilization of the situation along the Macedonian borders. Equally important is its civilian component, which is assisting in the efforts to ease the inter-ethnic tensions and in the application of the international standards of human rights.

The fact that UNPREDEP operates successfully in a European hotbed of tension is of importance to the United Nations in its effort to maintain its global role. Such a role requires the presence of the United Nations in all the regions of the world where threats to international peace persist. The situation in the immediate vicinity of Kosovo, which continues to represent a threat to peace and security in the region, gives additional importance and urgency to the role of UNPREDEP. At this critical moment for the efforts to stabilize Kosovo, the United Nations should not diminish its contribution to peace and security in that region.

For all these reasons, we hope that today's vote on UNPREDEP will not be the last decision of the Security Council related to the need to preserve and strengthen peace and security in and around Macedonia. Slovenia strongly supports the idea of continued consultations among the Security Council members and with Macedonia. These consultations must lead to an arrangement acceptable to Macedonia and the Security Council members and should ensure the continued pursuit of the tasks which made UNPREDEP necessary. We are determined to contribute our share to such an effort.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation voted against the draft resolution a short while ago. We have always maintained that United Nations peacekeeping operations, including preventive deployment missions, should not be open-ended. The situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has apparently stabilized in the past few years, its relations with neighbouring countries have been improved, and peace and stability there have not been adversely affected by developments in that region. In his recent reports, including document S/1999/161 before us, the Secretary-General has clearly

indicated that the original goal of the Security Council in establishing the preventive mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has already been met. In this case, there is no need to extend further the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP).

I should also like to reiterate that Africa and other regions are still plagued by conflict and instability and need greater attention and contributions from the United Nations. In view of the Organization's current financial difficulties, it would be neither reasonable nor fair to continue to assess Member States for UNPREDEP. The already insufficient resources of the United Nations should be used where they are needed most.

UNPREDEP has contributed to the maintenance of a stable situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. China highly appreciates the contributions of the Secretary-General and others, including countries that have contributed troops to UNPREDEP.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Canada.

(spoke in French)

Today, Canada voted in favour of a mandate extension for the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In Canada's opinion, UNPREDEP's continued presence in Macedonia is essential at this critical juncture, given the continuing instability in the region, particularly in neighbouring Kosovo.

As the Secretary-General indicates in his report of 12 February, UNPREDEP has played an important role to this day in preventing the spillover of the wider Balkan conflict into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. UNPREDEP has been an unquestionable success to date, the first and unique example of preventive deployment under United Nations auspices. It is our sole reminder of the undeniable cost-effectiveness of prevention in all aspects of international peace and security. The success of the Force has been all the more impressive in light of the situation in Kosovo. Given this success and the region's instability, Canada strongly supports renewing UNPREDEP's mandate. We worked hard — unfortunately, to no avail — to convince the concerned parties to agree to the Force's extension and to overcome the bilateral concerns which threatened its continuation.

(spoke in English)

It is with keen disappointment that we note that, despite solid support for extending UNPREDEP, the Council was unable to do so as a result of the negative vote cast by China. In our view, arguments that conditions no longer warrant the presence of UNPREDEP simply cannot be sustained by an examination of the facts. We believe that China's decision, seemingly compelled by bilateral concerns unrelated to UNPREDEP, constitutes an unfortunate and inappropriate use of the veto. In this same light, we deeply regret that actions taken by the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia precipitated the bilateral dispute leading to the present situation.

Canada is also deeply concerned that the inability of the Council to agree to a mandate extension for UNPREDEP, in spite of the clear need for such an extension and despite the expressed will of the vast majority of Council members, has set a negative precedent at this critical juncture for peace and stability in the Balkans. The credibility and authority of the Security Council may, we fear, suffer just when they are most needed in this region and beyond.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The Council has thus concluded its voting procedure.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf of the European Union. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association country members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway.

The European Union fully supports the draft resolution which was put before the Council today. It continues to attach great importance to the role of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) as a stabilizing and peace-promoting

element in the geopolitical context of the region. UNPREDEP is the first preventive deployment force of the United Nations and, as such — and this is the generally accepted view — a great success. It can serve as a model for future such deployments. The European Union sees the value of UNPREDEP not only in its military component and its border monitoring, but also in its civilian efforts to promote understanding among the different ethnic groups in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The European Union considers that there exists a real danger of a spillover of the Kosovo crisis into neighbouring countries. The Rambouillet meeting has established a framework for a solution of the crisis, but has not yet brought the parties to full agreement.

The European Union therefore deeply regrets that China decided to veto the draft resolution on the extension of the mandate for another six months. At this crucial moment in the efforts to bring peace to Kosovo, the withdrawal of UNPREDEP should not be contemplated. We earnestly hope that an arrangement can be found within the next few days to prevent this from happening.

The EU points out that the Security Council has the primary responsibility for international peace and security and that it carries out its duties on behalf of the United Nations membership as a whole. UNPREDEP has been mandated by the Security Council with precisely this responsibility in mind and, in particular, to serve the international interest in stability in the region to which the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia belongs.

The European Union sincerely hopes that all Governments concerned, both in the Security Council and in the region, will make every effort to maintain the United Nations current stabilizing presence in the region.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Bulgaria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sotirov (Bulgaria): As the Bulgarian delegation is taking the floor for the first time this month, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your competent and skilful guidance of the activities of the Security Council.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union and fully shares the views contained therein. I shall therefore confine myself to some specific aspects of the issue under consideration. Those are related to the commitment and the efforts of Bulgaria as a neighbouring country in the search for long-term solutions to the conflicts and to the open issues in the western part of the region.

Our policy is aimed at achieving concrete results in strengthening the regional peace and security in South-Eastern Europe. An example of these efforts is the signing of the Bulgarian-Macedonian joint declaration three days ago by the Prime Ministers of the two countries. It settled the controversial issues and opened new prospects for mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation. It also made a valuable contribution to the stability and security of the region and set an example of how difficult problems can be overcome in a spirit of understanding and in the interests of the countries involved.

The peacekeeping activities of the United Nations are at a crucial juncture. The failure of some peacekeeping operations has tarnished the image of the Organization and has undermined its credibility in fulfilling one of the main purposes laid down in the Charter: the maintenance of international peace and security. It is therefore of utmost importance to preserve and, where necessary, to enlarge the mandates of those existing peacekeeping operations that have proved to be successful. Hence, it is regrettable that the Council was unable to adopt today a decision on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) for another period of six months.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned at the real possibility of a further escalation of the conflict in Kosovo if the current peace process fails to provide for a lasting solution. Such a situation requires that available means should be effectively used. One of them is UNPREDEP, which continues to be a stabilizing factor of prevention and deterrence.

Bulgaria strongly believes that the extension of the mandate of UNPREDEP is in the interest of peace and security in the area and that the present situation on the ground makes the withdrawal of the Force very untimely and inappropriate.

The President: I thank the representative of Bulgaria for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): We have taken note of the statements made by several representatives. We believe that deciding one's own position on the merits of a matter is the right of every sovereign State.

Some countries made accusations against China. Those accusations are totally groundless.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.